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ABSTRACT

New Jersey's Hudson County Community College (HCCC) surveys all graduates 1 year after graduation to determine their objectives for enrolling at the college and the level that they achieved their objectives. Between 1990 and 1994, 219 graduates responded the surveys, of whom 208 answered the question regarding their initial objective for enrolling. Although responses varied between classes, overall 75% selected reasons related to a job or a career, including 40% who sought to prepare for a first career, 20% who to prepare for a career change, and 15% to improve job skills. Eighty-seven percent indicated that they had achieved their objective, but 10% indicated that they had not. Since students may change their goals during their studies, beginning in 1992 graduates were asked to state the most important reason that they had remained at HCCC through graduation. Of 123 respondents to this question, the reason selected most often was to complete courses for transfer credit (34%), followed by to improve job skills (20%), prepare for a first career (16%), and prepare for a career change (15%). Sixty-nine percent indicated that they had achieved this continuing objective and 14% indicated that they had not. Finally, of the 119 students who indicated both an initial reason for enrolling and a reason for continuing, 28 gave the same reasons, while 91 had changed their goals. (AJL)

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HUDSON COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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REASONS FOR ATTENDING HCCC:

Results of Survey of Graduates of the Classes of 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993 and 1994

Eleanor Fujita

Special Report 95.04
January 1996

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

All students who graduated in the Classes of 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, and 1994 were sent a questionnaire one year after graduation. One of the purposes of the survey is to learn about the goals these graduates had for enrolling at HCCC. Highlights of the findings from that survey include the following:

- Three-fourths of the respondents indicated that they had initially enrolled at the College (initial objective) for job-related purposes: 40% to prepare for a first career, 20% to prepare for a career change, and 15% to improve job skills
- Nearly nine of every ten respondents felt that by the time they graduated, they had achieved their initial objective
- One-third of the respondents from the Classes of 1992 through 1994 stated that the reason they remained at the College to graduate (continuing objective) was to complete courses for transfer credit
- Nearly seven of every ten felt they had achieved their continuing objective
- Of graduates listing both an initial and a continuing objective, one-fourth had not changed their objective, three-fourths had changed their objective
- For those changing objectives, the changes were generally away from job-related objectives and toward transfer objectives
- Nearly two-thirds of those indicating both an initial and a continuing goal felt that they achieved their objectives by the time they had graduated

This is the first in a series of reports presenting the results of the annual survey of recent HCCC graduates.

REASONS FOR ATTENDING HCCC:
Results of Survey of Graduates of the
Classes of 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993 and 1994

Initial Objectives

One of the questions we ask graduates when we survey them one year after graduation concerns the most important reason they first chose to attend HCCC (their initial objective). Several possible reasons are listed for them to choose from, or they can write in other reasons. When the graduates from the Classes of 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, and 1994 were asked this question, 208 of the 219 respondents answered. Three-fourths selected reasons related to a job or career:

Initial Objective	N	%
To prepare for first career	83	40%
To prepare for career change	41	20%
To improve job skills	31	15%
To complete courses for transfer credit	23	11%
Multiple reasons	11	5%
Other reason	7	3%
To learn English	7	3%
To take courses for personal interest	5	2%

'Other' initial objectives included "financial" or "college costs," "to acquire knowledge," "to get a degree," "challenge," "to improve career opportunities," and one was unspecified.

Responses varied by Class, however (see Table 1):

- the Class of 1990 had the highest percentage intending to prepare for a first career (48%) and completing courses for transfer (20%)

- the Class of 1992 had the highest percentage intending to improve job skills (22%) and the lowest percentage intending to prepare for a career change (8%)

- the Class of 1993 had the highest percentage preparing for a career change (29%) or taking courses for personal interest (9%), and the lowest percentage preparing for a first career (29%) or completing courses for transfer (4%)

- the Class of 1994 had the lowest percentage enrolled to improve job skills (10%)

Table 1. **Initial Objectives of 1990 - 1994 Graduates (Reasons They First Attended HCCC)**

Initial Objectives	1990		1991		1992		1993		1994		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
To improve job skills	4	16	7	17	8	22	6	13	6	10	31	15
To prepare for first career	12	48	18	44	14	39	13	29	26	43	83	40
To prepare for career change	4	16	10	24	3	8	13	29	11	18	41	20
To complete courses for transfer credit	5	20	4	10	5	14	2	4	7	11	23	11
To take courses for personal interest	0	-	0	-	0	-	4	9	1	2	5	2
To learn English*	-	-	1	2	2	6	1	2	3	5	7	3
Other/multiple reasons	0	-	1	2	4	11	6	13	7	11	18	9
Total	25	100	41	99	36	100	45	99	61	100	208	100

* This objective was first included on 1992 survey; a 1991 graduate listed it as an 'other' objective.

Next we asked whether or not they had achieved this initial objective by the time they had graduated. The vast majority 181 (87%) responded that they had indeed achieved their objective; a few, 20 (10%) said they had not, and even fewer, 7 (3%) did not answer either way (see Table 2). Of those not achieving their objective, 11 had intended to prepare for a first career, 7 had intended to prepare for a career change, and 1 each had intended to improve their job skills or prepare for transfer. Respondents of the Class of 1992 were apparently the most satisfied that they had met their goals (94%).

Table 2. **Achievement of Initial Objectives of 1990 - 1994 Graduates**

Were Initial Objectives Achieved?	1990		1991		1992		1993		1994		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	21	84	37	90	34	94	35	78	54	89	181	87
No	3	12	4	10	1	3	5	11	7	11	20	10
No Response	1	4	0	-	1	3	5	11	0	-	7	3
Total	25	100	41	100	36	100	45	100	61	100	208	100

Continuing Objectives

We recognized that students may change their goals during their studies, and with the Class of 1992, we began to ask what was the most important reason they had remained at HCCC through graduation (their continuing objective). Of the 150 respondents for the Classes of 1992, 1993, and 1994, 123 answered the question. Although one-half mentioned job or career, the single reason selected most often related to preparation for transfer. Only fourteen graduate respondents in these three classes indicated that preparation for transfer was their initial reason for *first enrolling* at HCCC, but this number *tripled* when they were asked why they *stayed* at the college to graduate.

Continuing Objective	N	%
To complete courses for transfer credit	42	34%
To improve job skills	25	20%
To prepare for first career	20	16%
To prepare for career change	19	15%
To take courses for personal interest	8	7%
Other reason	4	3%
Multiple reasons	3	2%
To learn English	2	2%

'Other' continuing objectives included: "to obtain a degree," or "to get a degree," "convenience," and "to be eligible for A.R.T."

Continuing objectives did not vary a great deal from class to class (see Table 3).

Table 3. **Continuing Objectives of 1992 - 1994 Graduates (Reasons They Stayed to Graduate from HCCC)**

Continuing Objectives	1992		1993		1994		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
To improve job skills	6	20	8	18	11	22	25	20
To prepare for first career	4	13	7	16	9	18	20	16
To prepare for career change	4	13	9	20	6	12	19	15
To complete courses for transfer credit	11	37	13	30	18	37	42	34
To take courses for personal interest	2	7	4	9	2	4	8	7
To learn English	0	0	2	5	0	0	2	2
Other/multiple reasons	3	10	1	2	3	6	7	6
Total	30	100	44	100	49	99	123	100

Again, we asked whether or not they had achieved this continuing objective by the time they had graduated. And, while the response was not as strong, it was still overwhelmingly positive (see Table 4): 85 (69%) answered that they had achieved their continuing objective, 17 (14%) said they had not, and 21 (17%) gave no response. Of those not achieving their continuing objective, 10 had stayed to prepare for a career change, 3 to prepare for a transfer and 2 each to improve job skills or prepare for a first career.

Table 4. Achievement of Continuing Objectives of 1992 - 1994 Graduates

Were Continuing Objectives Achieved?	1992		1993		1994		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	22	73	27	61	36	73	85	69
No	4	13	7	16	6	12	17	14
No Response	4	13	10	23	7	14	21	17
Total	30	99	44	100	49	99	123	100

Changing Objectives

Since we had asked graduates in the Classes of 1992, 1993, and 1994 both why they had first enrolled at HCCC and why they had stayed to graduate, we were then able to consider the changing nature of the goals of these successful students. Of the 123 giving reasons why they had stayed to graduate, 119 had also given the reason why they had initially enrolled (see Table 5). The initial objective of 28 of these graduates had not changed from the time they entered the college to the time they had graduated. In order, these stable goals were: preparing for a first career (10), preparing to transfer (7), preparing for a career change (6), improving job skills (4), and for personal interest (1). Nearly three-fourths (20 or 71%) felt they had achieved their abiding initial objective by the time they had graduated.

However, 91 noted that their initial objective had changed during the time they were enrolled at the college. Highlights of the data regarding the changing goals are as follows:

- Of the 32 who had come to prepare for a first career, 16 remained in order to prepare to transfer, and 9 to improve their job skills
- Of the 16 who had initially enrolled to improve their job skills, 7 decided to prepare for a career change and 7 others to transfer
- Of the 16 who had first enrolled to prepare for a career change, 6 stayed to improve their job skills and 5 to prepare to transfer

- Of the 10 who came for miscellaneous reasons, 5 remained in order to prepare to transfer

- Of the 6 who came to learn English, 4 stayed in order to prepare for a first career

Of 91 with changing objectives, 54 (59%) responded that they had achieved not only their initial, but also their continuing objective by the time they had graduated. Positive highlights of the data regarding the satisfaction of the changing goals:

- Of the 9 who came to prepare for a first career and stayed to improve job skills, nearly nine-tenths (8; 89%) achieved both goals

- Of the 16 who came to prepare for a first career and stayed to prepare to transfer, over four-fifths (13; 81%) achieved both goals

- Of the 7 who came to improve their job skills and stayed to prepare to transfer, nearly three-fourths (5, 71%) achieved both goals

However, of the 7 who came to improve their job skills but remained to prepare for a career change, none felt they had achieved both goals by the time they had graduated (one had not achieved either goal; the remaining had improved their job skills but had not fulfilled their goal of changing careers).

Conclusion

Graduates of the Classes of 1990 through 1994 responding to our survey one year after graduation answered that the initial reason for enrolling at HCCC was job or career related: 40% wanted to prepare for a first career, 20% wanted to prepare to change careers, 15% wanted to improve their job skills, and 11% wanted to prepare to transfer. However, when asked why they remained to graduate, respondents of the Classes of 1992 through 1994, answered that their goals had shifted slightly toward transfer aspirations: 34% stayed to prepare to transfer, 20% to improve job skills, 16% to prepare for a first career, and 15% to prepare for a career change.

Approximately one-fourth (24%) of the respondents of the Classes of 1992 through 1994 said that their reasons for attending HCCC had not changed. For those who had changed their aspirations, the changes were mainly away from preparation for a first career and toward a transfer.

All in all, graduates felt their goals had been achieved: 90% of those giving an initial objective felt, 70% of those with a continuing goal, and 62% of those with both an initial and a continuing goal.

Table 5. Comparison of Initial and Continuing Objectives of 1992, 1993, and 1994 Graduates

Initial Objectives		Continuing Objectives								
		Improve Job Skills	Prepare for First Career	Prepare for Career Change	Complete Courses for Transfer Credit	Take Courses for Personal Interest	Learn English	Other/ multiple	Total	No Continuing Objective Given
Objectives with Number Selecting Objective, and in Parenthesis, Number Achieving Initial Objective		Number Selecting Initial and Continuing Objectives, and in Parenthesis, Number Achieving Both Initial Objectives								
Improve Job Skills	20 (17)	4 (2)	-	7 (0)	7 (5)	-	-	2 (1)	20 (8)	-
Prepare for First Career	53 (48)	9 (8)	10 (8)	2 (0)	16 (13)	3 (3)	1 (1)	1 (1)	42 (34)	11
Prepare for Career Change	27 (21)	6 (4)	2 (1)	6 (4)	5 (3)	2 (1)	-	1 (1)	22 (14)	5
Complete Courses for Transfer Credit	14 (12)	1 (0)	2 (2)	-	7 (5)	1 (0)	-	-	11 (7)	3
Take Courses for Personal Interest	5 (5)	1 (0)	-	2 (0)	1 (1)	1 (1)	-	-	5 (2)	-
Learn English	6 (6)	1 (1)	4 (2)	1 (0)	-	-	-	-	6 (3)	-
Other/multiple reasons	17 (16)	2 (2)	-	1 (0)	5 (3)	1 (0)	1 (0)	3 (1)	13 (6)	4
Total	142 (123)	24 (17)	18 (13)	19 (4)	41 (30)	8 (5)	2 (1)	7 (4)	119 (74)	23
No Initial Objective Given	8	1	2	-	1	-	-	-	4	4

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